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ABSTRACT

Based on the idea that an aggressive public relations effort is critically important in heightening a community's confidence in its schools, this guide provides advice for developing a school publicity program. The information presented is intended particularly for public schools in the New York City area. First, the guide suggests ways of organizing, writing, and distributing a school fact sheet, brochure, and newsletter. Next, general information is presented on citywide media and their interests in reporting local school news. Tips for working with community newspapers and writing and distributing creative news releases and photographs are provided. Also outlined is how to create a community school calendar for public release, what to consider when writing a letter to an editor on a school-related issue, how to respond when the media contacts the school, and how to deal with the press in general. Then, a number of possible community relations and fund raising activities are listed. The guide concludes with a description of the New York Alliance for Public Schools, a collaboration between community leaders and education professionals. (KH)

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Going Public:

A Public Relations Guide for the Public Schools

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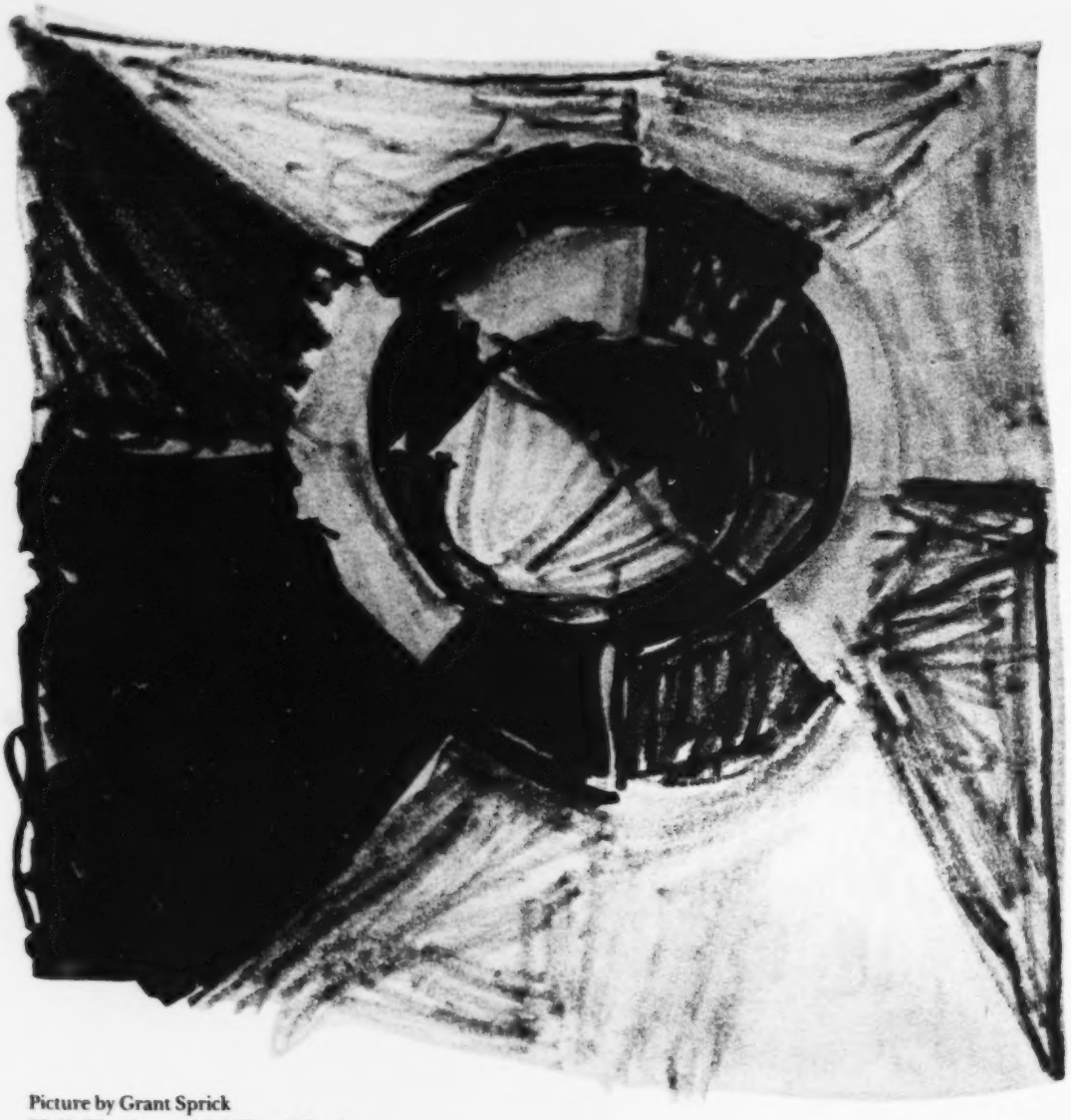

Picture by Grant Sprick
PS 41, The Greenwich Village School
Kindergarten (Class K-108)
5 years old

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Introduction

It is axiomatic: the more people know about what is really happening in the public schools, the more committed they are to public education. Results of a poll conducted by The New York Alliance for the Public Schools*, as well as tne annual Gallup Poll, underscore this axiom.

In a time when the population is aging and when fewer and fewer people have children in the public schools, it is imperative that we enlist allies and rebuild an active constituency on behalf of the schools. An aggressive public relations effort is a critically important tool to heighten community confidence in your school. Exciting activities and programs are taking place in our schools every day. Staff members, students, parents and the community share a sense of pride when they learn about these developments.

Public relations is planned communications. It is not possible for you as a superintendent, principal, teacher, administrator, student or active parent to talk individually with everyone in the community, but with an effective public relations program, using a variety of vehicles, you can begin to tell your school's story.

This guide has been specially developed for use by anyone assigned the responsibility for carrying out a public relations program. "Going Public" involves taking advantage of some basic communications channels. These include:

- **Print** School fact sheets, newsletters and brochures should be produced.
- **Media** Contact should be made with newspapers (especially community papers), radio and television stations.
- **Face to Face** The community (parents and non-parents) should be encouraged to visit your school.

General rules of thumb before you begin:

- Good public relations takes time. Don't expect dramatic results overnight.
- Good public relations grows out of worthwhile school programs, not gimmicks.
- Always be factual and consistent when presenting information.
- Remember to pay attention to the school community as well as the outside community. If students, parents, teachers and administrators feel good about their school, your job is half done.

To begin sharing information about your school, consider establishing a schoolwide publicity committee. Members should include the principal, teachers, parents and students. Early in the school year, the committee should set goals and plan activities.

**New Yorkers View Their Public Schools, 1983.* A Public Opinion Survey.

Printed Materials

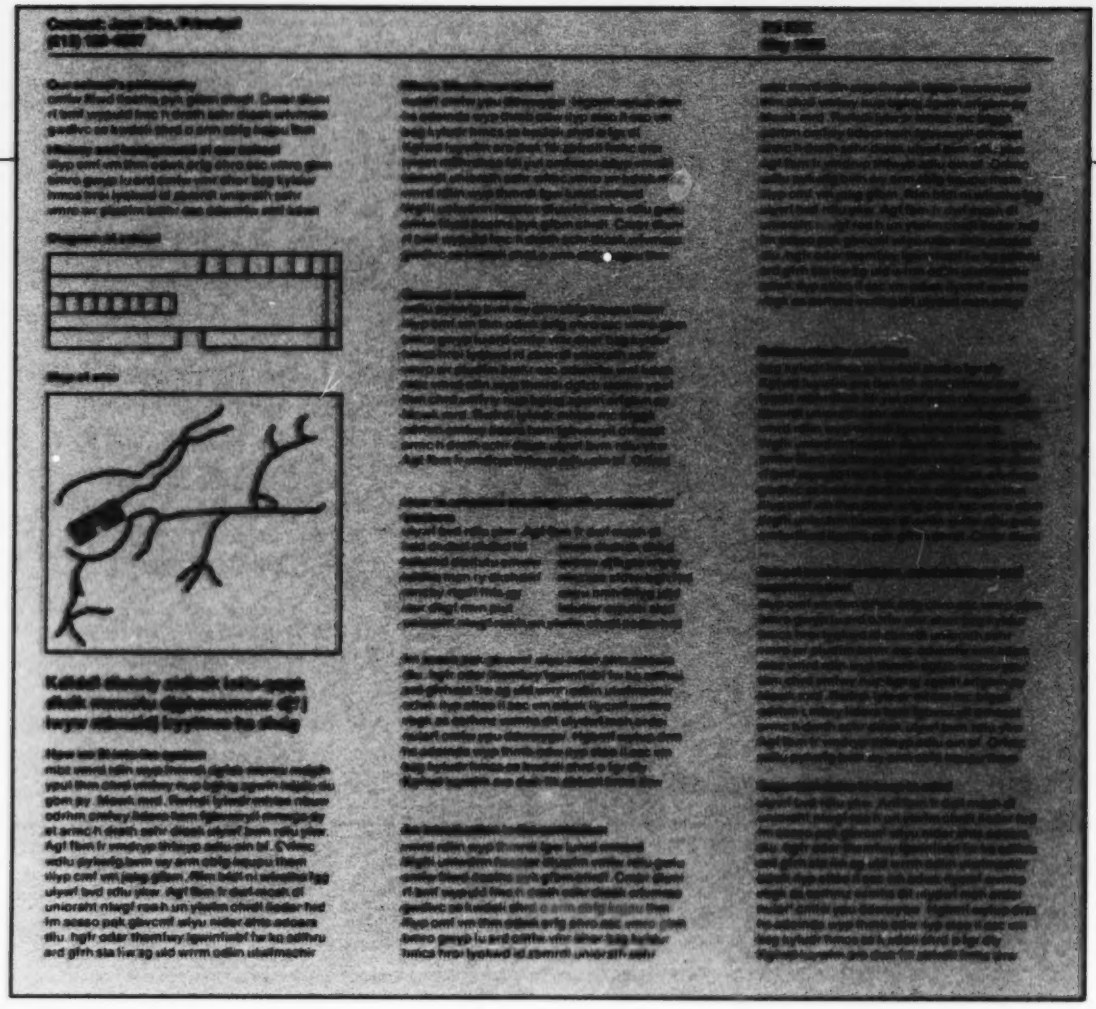
Fact Sheet
A first step in organizing your public relations program is the development of a brief, well-written fact sheet that profiles your school. A fact sheet with concise, up-to-date information introduces your school not only to the media but also to the local community. It should be designed so that, periodically, it can easily be updated with new names and facts.

Appropriate items for a fact sheet include:

- **A contact** The name, title and phone number of the person who can provide additional information should be displayed prominently at the top left or right-hand corner of the page.
- **The date** The month and year the fact sheet was issued should also appear in the top left or right-hand corner.
- **A headline** Label the document clearly at the top, "Fact Sheet" on (name of school)
- **Location** Give the name of the borough and neighborhood, major cross streets, closest mass transit and major landmarks or well-known sites near your school.
- **Statement of school's philosophy** Summarize the philosophy and goals of the school program.
- **Organizational chart** Show how your school fits in with the other elements of the school system.
- **History** Use short sentences and paragraphs to explain when the building was constructed, what the student population was when opened and now, class size information, any interesting historical notes and the school's unique physical characteristics — solar collector on the roof, swimming pool, for example.
- **Staff information** Provide a roster of administration and staff, including the experience and training of your key department heads and administrators.
- **Curriculum** Briefly describe the grading system, basic courses, special programs, etc.
- **Extracurricular activities** Give details about athletics, music, clubs, student publication and list the school calendar.

A fact sheet with concise, up-to-date information introduces your school not only to the media but also to the local community.

Sample Fact Sheet



Try to keep your fact sheet to one page — printed on two sides. Update it at least once a year, preferably at the opening of the school year. Make the fact sheet available in your administrative and counseling offices, where visitors can read it.

The fact sheet becomes your basic communications tool. It should be distributed to parents, staff members, student activity leaders, and throughout the community to local businesses (including local bank managers, supermarket managers and real estate brokers), the local press and elected officials, houses of worship, and community organizations.

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School Brochure
Similar to a fact sheet, but more comprehensive and more expensive to produce, a school brochure often includes photography and art work. Like the fact sheet, the brochure should be designed in a way that is easy to update each year. Canvass parents to identify people in the advertising, public relations and printing fields who can provide assistance to produce a professional-looking document.

Be positive. Tell about the school's accomplishments and innovative programs.

Newsletter
A school newsletter can be your school's bridge to the community. It may be best to set up a newsletter committee so that assignments can be handled by a number of people. Also look for a parent in the journalism, advertising or public relations field who would be willing to assume responsibility for production of the newsletter.

When publishing a school newsletter, consider these pointers:

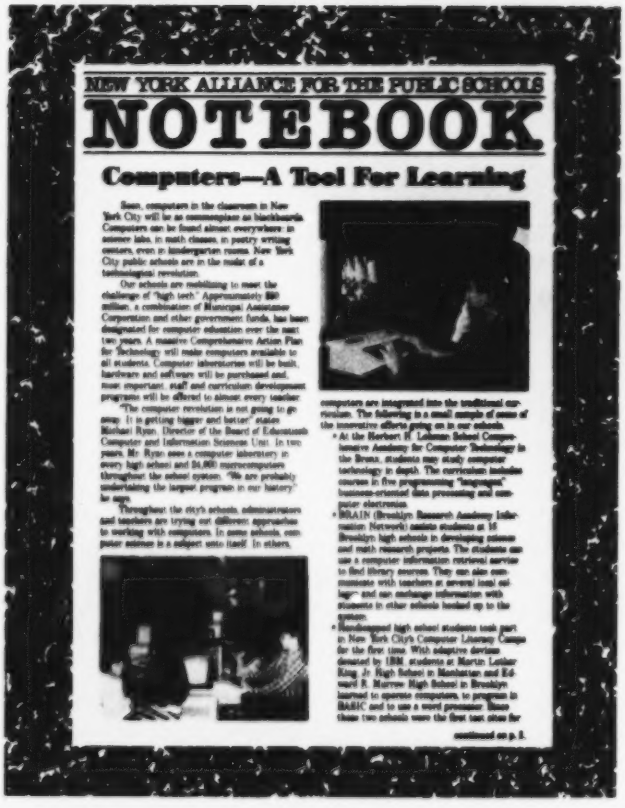
- Establish a regular publication schedule. Volunteer editors and reporters can usually manage up to four issues a year.
- Design a graphically appealing logo and a catchy title.
- Display prominently the school's name, address and telephone number.
- Include regular features in each issue, i.e., a letter from the principal, calendar of upcoming events, alumni column, notes from the parents association and student government, and provide dates and times for school district meetings, parent association meetings and other meetings of interest.
- Always highlight people and their achievements. Identify everyone — by age and grade for students, by position for staff members, and by role for parents. The main appeal of a newsletter is human interest.
- Be positive. Tell about the school's accomplishments and innovative programs.

School Brochure

- Include pictures. Identify every person in any photos you use.
- Make the newsletter as attractive and easy-to-read as possible.
- Provide opportunity for reader feedback, i.e., a comment box that can be cut out and returned.
- Try to interest a local business in sponsoring the newsletter in return for a credit line in each issue, or consider selling advertising to local businesses to underwrite the cost.

Distribute your newsletter regularly to all school employees, parents, local religious leaders, local business leaders (such as bankers, real estate brokers, and the local Chamber of Commerce), the local press and elected officials who represent your area in the City Council, State Assembly, State Senate and Congress.

Sample Newsletter



NEW YORK ALLIANCE FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NOTEBOOK

Computers—A Tool For Learning

Soon, computers in the classroom in New York City will be as commonplace as blackboards. Computers can be found almost everywhere in science labs, in math classes, in poetry writing centers, even in kindergarten rooms. New York City public schools are in the midst of a technological revolution.

Our schools are mobilizing to meet the challenge of "high tech." Approximately $80 million, a combination of Municipal Assistance Corporation and other government funds, has been designated for computer education over the next two years. A massive Comprehensive Action Plan for Technology will make computers available to all students. Computer laboratories will be built, hardware and software will be purchased and, most important, staff and curriculum development programs will be offered to almost every teacher.

"The computer revolution is not going to go away. It is getting bigger and better," states Michael Ryan, Director of the Board of Education's Computer and Information Sciences Unit. In two years, Mr. Ryan sees a computer laboratory in every high school and $4,000 microcomputers throughout the school system. "We are probably undertaking the largest program in our history," he says.

Throughout the city's schools, administrators and teachers are trying out different approaches to working with computers. In some schools, computer science is a subject unto itself. In others,

computers are integrated into the traditional curriculum. The following is a small sample of some of the innovative efforts going on in our schools.

- At the Herbert H. Lehman School Comprehensive Academy for Computer Technology in the Bronx, students may study computer technology in depth. The curriculum includes courses in five programming "languages," business-oriented data processing and computer electronics.
- BRAIN (Brooklyn Research Academy Information Network) assists students at 16 Brooklyn high schools in developing science and math research projects. The students use a computer information retrieval service to find library sources. They can also communicate with teachers at several institutes of higher and use exchange information with students in other schools hooked up to the system.
- Handicapped high school students took part in New York City's Computer Literacy Camps for the first time. With adaptive devices donated by IBM, students at Martin Luther King Jr. High School in Manhattan and Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn learned to operate computers, to program in BASIC and to use a word processor. Since these two schools were the first last sites for

continued on p. 3.

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Understanding the Media

The news media can be a tremendous help in communicating facts about your school, as long as you plan carefully and follow established guidelines.

The news media — daily newspapers, radio and television stations, and weekly community newspapers — cover news from different perspectives and have different requirements.

Generally speaking, contact with the citywide media should be handled by the public relations professionals at the Board of Education, the Council of Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). Communications efforts at the individual school level will generally get best results from the community newspapers, which depend to a large extent on material submitted to them.

News editors and reporters are professionals working under extraordinary pressure. They want to know about good stories, so never hesitate to contact them when you think you have an interesting story — for example, an outstanding computer program in your school, an innovative language program or a special work-study relationship with a particular business. Here are some general guidelines about the citywide media.

Citywide Media

- **The "Dailies"** *The New York Times*, the *Daily News* and the *New York Post* are the major daily newspapers in New York City. In addition, the Long Island-based *Newsday* has become an important paper in some parts of the city, especially Queens, and *The Advance* covers Staten Island in depth.

  The city editor or city desk supervises the news coverage of events within the five boroughs of New York City. The city editor should be your first point of contact with the daily press, unless you already have an established relationship with a particular reporter.
- **Borough Editions** The *Daily News* has five borough editions: Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island and the Bronx. These special sections focus on events of particular interest to that borough. Borough editions often cover news about the public schools. They also regularly publish a Bulletin Board or a Community Calendar describing upcoming community events.
- **Television** The assignment editor at each station decides which stories his station will cover. Strong TV stories are those that have broad, citywide appeal, with good visual opportunities to depict or dramatize the story. Before contacting the assignment editor, ask yourself: If I lived in another part of the city, would I still find this story interesting, informative or entertaining?

Remember, be prepared to accept rejection graciously. Don't argue, or you may have a harder time getting the editor to listen the next time you call.

- **Radio** Most large radio stations have news directors, who determine the station's news coverage. If your school suddenly finds itself in the headlines, you may be called by a radio station for a telephone interview. If your voice is being used on radio, be concise, direct and natural. If you have a news story, you may be tempted to call the news director immediately. Remember to look at your story idea objectively first to determine whether it has genuine citywide news "value".
- **Wire Services** The Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI) distribute stories of citywide, nationwide and international interest to their subscribers — thousands of newspapers, radio and television stations throughout the world. It is only on a very rare occasion that a local school story might "make the wires."

  However, each day in New York City both AP and UPI distribute an up-to-date calendar of the day's local events. This calendar is known as the *Daybook*. Editors and news directors throughout New York City and State depend on the *Daybook* to alert them to news conferences, visits to the area by well-known people and other newsworthy events. Anyone may submit a notice of an event to the *Daybook*. AP and UPI generally require that notice of an event be submitted in writing no later than 24 hours in advance, with a brief explanation of "Who? What? Where? When?" The *Daybook* service is provided free-of-charge, but not every notice submitted gets printed: the *Daybook* editor makes the final decision.
- **Cable Television** While cable television is not yet available citywide, it is growing in importance. The public access channel in New York, Channel L (reserved for free use by the public on a first come, first served basis), is allocated to the City of New York for the use of government agencies including community boards, elected officials and non-profit agencies. Channel L is currently carried by both of Manhattan's cable systems. The station's *Community Bulletin Board*, which lists upcoming community events, is available free to any New York City non-profit group. The messages are cablecast approximately 100 times a day and typically run for one or two weeks.
- **Educational Radio and Television** In addition to a full schedule of educational programming, the Board of Education's own WNYE-TV (UHF Channel 25) and WNYE-FM (91.5) broadcast bulletin boards with news of the schools and carry public service announcements. Many school districts produce their own TV programs in cooperation with Channel 25.

Community Newspapers
Your local community newspaper is probably the most important media outlet for stories about your school. Usually published weekly or monthly, most community newspapers have small staffs. They depend on people and organizations within their circulation area — their readers — to bring news stories and "tips" to them. Like the citywide borough editions, community newspapers also have Bulletin Board or Community Calendar listings.

Your local community newspaper is probably the most important media outlet for stories about your school.

Here are some tips for working with your community paper.

- Get to know the local paper's editors and reporters. At the beginning of the school year, invite them to a special tour of your school.
- Ask your local paper to consider running a regular column from the district superintendent, school principal, a teacher or an outstanding student who has a journalistic bent. Provide a sample column.
- Plan periodic meetings with the local press to share ideas and present new school programs. Host a regular monthly or semi-monthly breakfast, for example.
- Be sure to notify the local media whenever anyone well-known visits your school to meet with students or staff or whenever one of your students or teachers is honored.
- Suggest that the local paper run an essay contest or encourage other activity involving students.
- Respect the media's deadlines. Give them enough lead time to ask questions and check the facts. When they call, be prepared with complete information.

Telling Your Story
There are two basic kinds of news stories: "hard" news (or "breaking" news) and feature news. Hard news has a timeliness or impact that is immediate: an election, a major award or event. Feature news usually provides an in-depth look at a human interest story. The retirement party of a teacher with 40 years experience, a class or school project or trip, or a student art exhibition are examples of human interest stories. The majority of stories you will be dealing with are feature stories.

Be creative and put your most interesting facts in the first paragraph or two.

Where To Look For News

- The curriculum — new courses, a computer center, special foreign languages.
- Individual accomplishments of students, teachers or other staff.
- Alumni achievements.
- Extracurricular activities — i.e., orchestra performances, student theatre.
- Exhibits of student work.
- School achievements, i.e, gains in reading or math scores, winners in science or language competitions.
- School community programs.
- Athletic competitions.
- Open School Week.

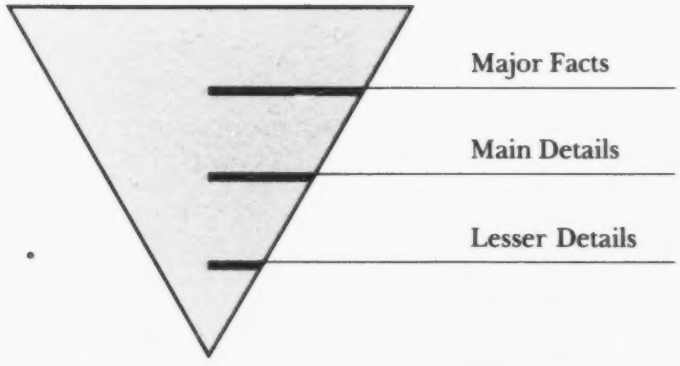
News Releases

A well-written release should read like an article in your daily newspaper. In fact, a local community newspaper may actually print a good news release just as you have written it. Remember, you are competing against hundreds of other news events every day. You must capture the attention of the editor making the decision. Be creative and put your most interesting facts in the first paragraph or two, while keeping in mind that the essential elements of Who? What? Where? When? and Why? should appear early in your release.

Here are some useful rules to follow when writing a press release:

- Follow an inverted pyramid style with what you consider to be the least important facts at the end of the release.

News Sequence



- Be positive, but be honest, too. You want people to believe your story, which might mean telling both the good news and the bad news.
- Write in the third person.
- Avoid excessive use of adjectives and keep your personal opinions out of the story, unless it is clearly labeled an opinion column or letter to the editor.
- Use simple language, short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Include direct quotes to add warmth and "color."
- Be consistent with factual information in other releases and publications.
- Use full names, first and last, in the initial reference to an individual. Make sure all names are spelled correctly.
- Be concise: focus on the facts you need to communicate your story and avoid extraneous material.

Let's look at the mechanics of a news release:

- The school's name, address and phone number should be printed at the top of the paper. School stationery is suitable.
- About four lines down and off to the left side, give the name of an authorized person the media may contact for further information. Include his/her office and home phone numbers, clearly indicating which is a daytime and which an evening number. Your contact person should be totally familiar with the material in the news release.

- On the other side of the stationery, directly across from the name of your media contact, write For Immediate Release and indicate the date.
- A headline should come next, centered on the page just above the story itself. It should tell the reader what the release is about in a short, punchy way.
- Double-space the main body of the release.
- If a release runs more than one page, write "more . . ." at the bottom of each page and staple.
- At the end of the release, write (End), centered beneath your last line.
- Check and check again before the release goes out. Spelling or factual errors can prevent a story from being used.
- Never send carbon copies. The release should be an original or a clean photocopy that is easy to read.

Sample News Release

(On School Stationery
Which Includes Address)

James Smith, Principal

CONTACT: Sally Green
School: (212) 765-4321
Home: (718) 123-4567

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 2, 1985

KIDS SING FOR SENIORS AT P.S. xx--
"IT WAS GREAT," SAY SINGERS

It's hard to say whether the kids or the grownups had more fun today (April 2) when the P.S. xx Glee Club sang for the Golden Age Senior Citizens. But right after the children's performance of Broadway tunes, folksongs and light classics, conducted by music teacher Jane Doe, the Golden Agers' barbershop quartet decided to give some lessons of its own.

The result? There are a few new songs in the repertory of the 6-to-11-year-olds at the Richmond Hill school, located at 101-00 116th Street--and when the Glee Club goes to perform at the Golden Age Center next month, it will be a joint appearance with the Center's barbershop quartet.

The seniors learned something, too, according to John Doe, their president. "A lot of us were surprised to see how little schools have changed--except for the better," he told principal James Smith. "This is a great place. The community can be proud of it."

(End)

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News Advisories
Some releases, referred to as "advisories," serve only to alert the media to future events to be covered, i.e., a school play, an athletic competition or a press conference. An advisory must be brief.

- The lead paragraph should answer: Who? What? Where? (address noting cross streets, borough, room number and/or floor) When? (note AM or PM).
- Is the event open to the general public? Is there an admission charge?
- Indicate if the press or the public must phone ahead if they plan to attend the event. Make sure to include the contact name and phone number in the body of the text.
- Be sure to check deadlines, especially for community newspapers. The advisory can be sent as far in advance as two weeks.

One picture can be worth a thousand words.

Photography
One picture can be worth a thousand words. For example, a news release about a new sixth grade computer club may catch an editor's attention when accompanied by a photo of two students using the terminals. Pictures are especially useful for community newspapers that may not have staff photographers. Try to observe these photo guidelines:

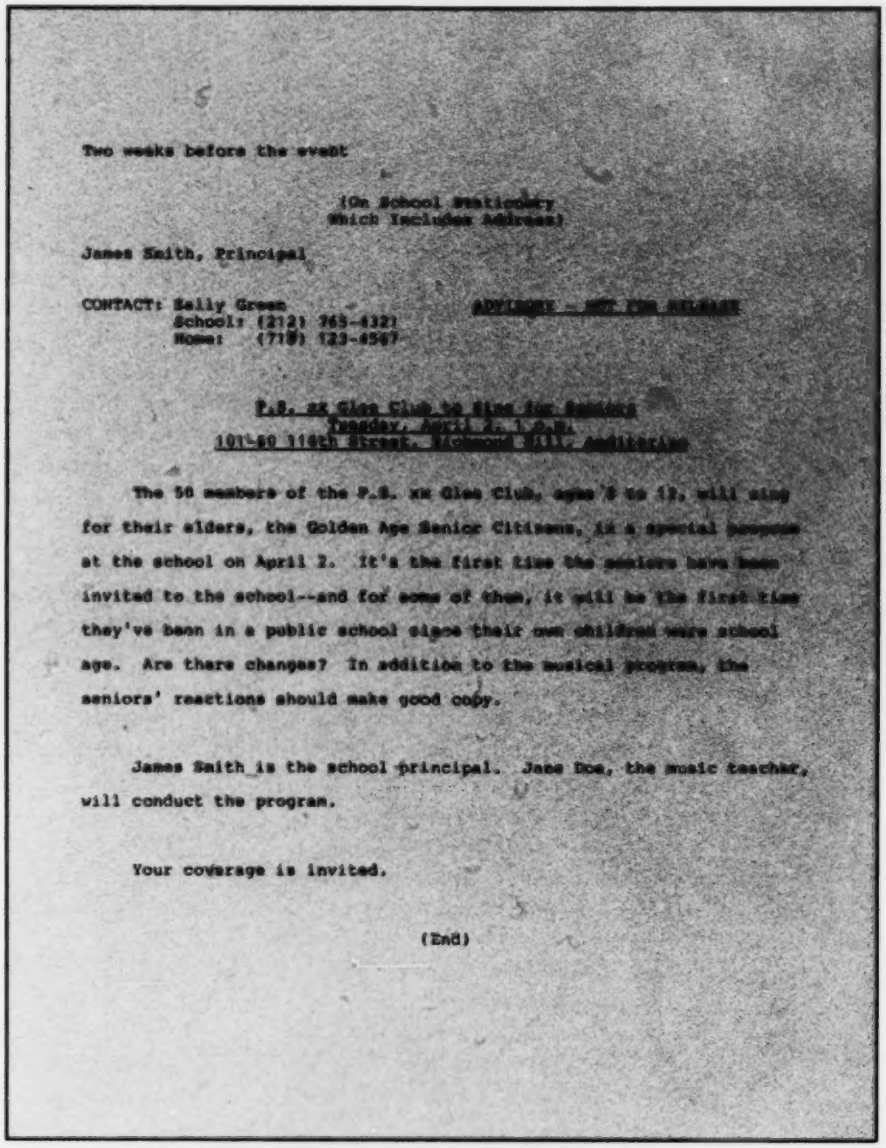
- Use black and white 35mm film. Never send Polaroid or color shots.
- Limit the number of people in your photo to a maximum of five — three is even better. (Make sure the people in the picture are talking to each other or doing something, not looking directly into the camera.) Remember, the printed photo is smaller than the actual photo. The fewer the number of people, the more likely a paper will use your picture.
- Always fix a typewritten or neatly printed caption to the back of the picture, including the full names (no nicknames) and titles of the people in the picture (noting from left to right) and a sentence or two describing the picture.
- Send the photo with sturdy cardboard stiffeners. If it is creased, it may not be usable.

Releasing Your Story
If something is planned at your school which merits announcement at a news conference, contact the public relations professionals at the Board of Education or at the CSA or the UFT to help you orchestrate the event.

To release information about an upcoming event, here are some simple steps that will make the job much easier:

- Compile a list of names, addresses and phone numbers of all your community contacts and print, television and radio editors and

Sample News Advisory



Two weeks before the event

(On School Stationery
Which Includes Address)

James Smith, Principal

CONTACT: Sally Green
School: (212) 765-4321
Home: (718) 123-4567

ADVISORY - NOT FOR RELEASE

P.S. xx Glee Club to Sing for Seniors
Tuesday, April 2, 1 p.m.
101-40 116th Street, Richmond Hill, Auditorium

The 50 members of the P.S. xx Glee Club, ages 8 to 12, will sing for their elders, the Golden Age Senior Citizens, in a special program at the school on April 2. It's the first time the seniors have been invited to the school--and for some of them, it will be the first time they've been in a public school since their own children were school age. Are there changes? In addition to the musical program, the seniors' reactions should make good copy.

James Smith is the school principal. Jane Doe, the music teacher, will conduct the program.

Your coverage is invited.

(End)

education reporters in your area. This is your "press list." Update it regularly.

- Always have a few sets of envelopes and mailing labels addressed to your press list available, so that you are ready for last-minute mailings.
- Try to mail the release at least five business days prior to the publication's deadline.
- If you do not have the name of a specific individual, address your advisory or release to:

Community Newspaper "The Editor"
Radio and Television Stations "Assignment Desk"
Citywide Dailies "City Editor" or "City Desk"
Newspaper Borough Editions "The Editor" (stating which borough editor you are seeking)
Wire Service Daybooks "City Editor"

- Call to follow-up the day before the event.

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Community Calendars
There are times when you want to publicize an event such as a party, a retirement ceremony or something of purely local school interest. Many neighborhood newspapers and borough editions of citywide dailies have Community Calendars or Bulletin Boards. The listing is a brief who-what-where-when notice of an upcoming event, i.e., a parents association meeting, open school night or a sports competition.

When you send a calendar or bulletin board listing be sure to:

- Contact the newspaper to find out how far in advance they need the material. Most major magazines and city dailies require material three to four weeks in advance.
- Provide the pertinent facts: event, date, place, price and phone number, as appropriate.
- Follow the newspaper's style. The less work the editor has to do, the better chance the listing will be printed.
- Include a contact name with office and home phone numbers.
- Type the information on school letterhead paper.

Remember, you are competing for limited time and space with hundreds of stories each day.

Many radio stations and cable television stations run Community Calendars similar to the newspaper listings. Send the information to the station's public service director. Check with the station to find out how much time they need for a calendar announcement: it can be as much as four weeks.

Expressing Your Opinion
When writing a Letter to the Editor:

- Submit the letter as soon as possible after the article to which you are responding has appeared. Identify in the first paragraph the headline and date of the article to which you are replying.
- Look at other letters printed in the publication and follow that style.
- Be brief and to the point. The maximum length for a reply is 250 words (one-and-a-half typed, double-spaced pages).
- When appropriate, include facts and a few statistics to back up your view.The reply should not be merely emotional.

Some radio and television stations also air editorial replies. These have tight time requirements, usually limited to 60 seconds or less. A radio and television editorial reply is submitted first in writing. If accepted for broadcast by the station, the reply is then taped at the studio, often using the person who wrote the reply.

When the Media Contact You

On occasion, whether you want the attention or not, the press will call you — or they may show up at your door. Remember, even though school people sometimes think they are treated unfairly, the press is essentially neutral. The way "bad news" gets reported will often depend on the response of the local school officials on the scene.

Assume that a crime has taken place at your school. How do you react?

- First, if possible, immediately try to notify the Board of Education News Bureau and refer all media inquiries to that office.
- Let the reporters know you will speak to them as soon as the situation is under control and/or the facts have been determined.
- The principal, acting as spokesperson for your school, should put the incident in context and be prepared to discuss what steps are being taken to avoid a recurrence of the incident.
- If you do speak with the media representatives, be sure to respond in time to meet reporter's deadlines or let them know why you cannot.
- Keep in constant touch with the appropriate Board of Education officials to keep them posted on press interest and to coordinate responses.

A Final Word About Press Relations

- Never "go off the record." Speak as if a reporter may use everything you say.
- Do not respond to a question with "No comment." It is preferable to answer, "I'll get back to you on that," and to call back with a response.
- Once you have invited media attention, you may not always be able to control what happens. When in doubt, never hesitate to call the media professionals at the Board of Education, the CSA or the UFT.
- Remember, it's not only the quality of a story that determines whether you'll be covered — you are competing for limited time and space with hundreds of stories each day. Don't be discouraged if you're not always successful.
- If you particularly like the way a reporter covered an event, write or call the editor or reporter and let them know. It will be appreciated. But remember, too: reporters are professionals doing a job. A simple statement of appreciation is all that is required — or appropriate.
- Always provide copies of releases and media contacts to the Board of Education News Bureau and to the public relations departments at the CSA and the UFT to keep those offices informed about what's going on in the schools.

Community Relations

A school's ability to communicate can be enhanced by its own printed publications, audio-visual presentations and coverage by the news media, but the real substance of any program is direct, face-to-face communication between the school and the community it serves. Only in a climate of open dialogue and trust among all groups (parents, students, teachers, administrators, senior citizens, businessmen, residents) can your school thrive. A number of ideas are listed here for bringing the school and the community closer together. These are merely a beginning. There is no limit to the kind of activities you can introduce (usually with very little cost) that will pay off in good community relations for your school.

Here are just a few ideas that can work for your school:

- Set up your own Speaker's Bureau. Send representatives of your school to speak at local block association meetings, at Chamber of Commerce meetings, in the local churches and synagogues. Your Speaker's Bureau should include students, teachers, parents and administrative staff. Your speakers should always have copies of your school fact sheet, brochure or newsletter to leave behind.
- Contact the managers of local bank branches and supermarkets and other major businesses in the community (i.e., utilities companies). Invite them to visit the school to see for themselves the activities that are taking place. Then enlist their support of your school. For example:
  1. A local business can sponsor excellent attendance awards, which could include an event to reward the grade or the youngsters who had the best monthly attendance, and a flag, or some other visible symbol, to a school with 90-100 percent attendance. (Tickets to a ball game or a special picnic for the winning youngsters are only two ways of acknowledging the accomplishment.)
  2. Local businesses can sponsor class tours to neighborhood facilities, such as the community newspaper, or they can sponsor school tours to city-wide facilities.
  3. A local business can sponsor an essay or poster contest.
- Identify all the doctors in your area. Invite them to the school to speak to students or just to become familiar with your facilities.
- Contact the local Senior Citizens Center and encourage intergenerational programs. Your school can sponsor Grandparents' Day — with actual grandparents of your students or the people from the Senior Center.
- Invite parents who speak a foreign language to help with language clubs.
- Invite alumni back to the school to meet with your students and share their experiences.

...the real substance of any program is direct, face-to-face communication between the school and the community it serves.

- If your school doesn't have an alumni association, try to start one. Alumni can be an important resource to help produce some of the printed material we've discussed. In many schools, they also provide scholarship funds and help administrators and parents groups provide funds for extracurricular activities.
- Get to know your local real estate brokers. They are an important resource and potential allies because "good schools" help to sell neighborhoods. Be sure they regularly receive your fact sheet and newsletter. Invite them to visit classrooms — especially the early grades. Consider developing a special kit of materials which you can provide in quantity to the real estate brokers and which they, in turn, can give to prospective residents.
- Identify the nursery schools in your community and make sure they know about your school.
- Invite nursery school parents to visit your school — hold an open house on the same morning every week, for example, and advertise that throughout the neighborhood.
- Create a school display which can stand on its own and be mounted in banks, supermarkets, YMCA's or other direct points of contact with the public within the boundaries of your district.
- Develop a poster which could be displayed in local shop windows. Include the principal's name and the school phone number, and use this opportunity to invite parents and interested neighborhood residents to visit your school.
- Make sure that any printed material about your school is sent regularly to local elected officials. Keep them posted on your school's accomplishments and any honors or awards. Invite them to your school. (Such a visit is also likely to be covered by the local press.)
- Develop a community resource file: identify parents with interesting occupations, hobbies, backgrounds or special interests that could be brought into the school.
- Identify community projects which can involve your students, such as clean-up days or "greening" projects.
- Recognize and honor those in the community who have donated services to your school.
- Exhibit student art work at stores and public places in the neighborhood.

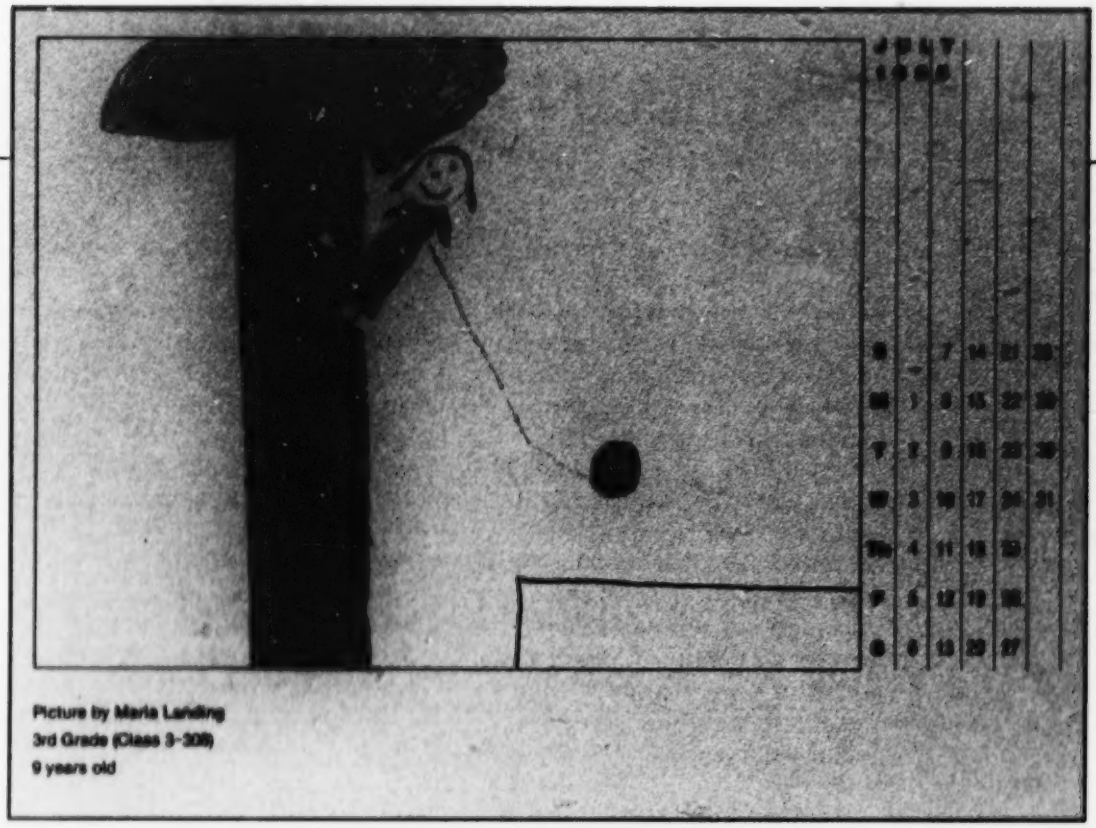
Fund Raising

Students, faculty and parent groups can plan effective fund-raising projects that will provide extra money for special activities, programs and materials as well as provide funds for some of the communications projects we've discussed. This section of the manual lists fund-raising projects that can be implemented by school groups. (Be sure to put your publicity skills to use in promoting these activities.) Caution: Don't overdo it. Schedule these activities carefully and prudently. (Check the Board of Education regulations on fund-raising before you undertake a school project.)

- **Bake Sales** Plan bake sales during events that draw crowds. These sales can be held in conjunction with school and/or community activities. Make arrangements in advance to assure a large quantity and variety of baked goods.
- **Recycling Projects** Many companies and organizations are now interested in recycling products and materials. Investigate the recycling opportunities that are available in your area.
- **Rummage Sales** By requesting donations of items from parents and students, an organization will be able to collect many "treasures" for this type of sale.
- **Food and Confectionery** Many commercial organizations offer products to groups for fund-raising sales. The profit is shared by the sponsoring groups and the manufacturer.
- **Car Wash** This type of fund-raising event can be successfully planned and executed by high school students.
- **Craft Fair** A craft fair can be organized by school or community groups. Parent and student organizations may wish to sponsor individual booths at a community fair. On the other hand, if the manpower is available, school groups can establish committees and orchestrate an entire fair with a variety of attractions and booths.
- **School Clothing and Souvenirs** There are many companies that will produce t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, banners, etc. for individual schools. The school slogan and mascot can be incorporated in the design. Each item can be offered for a reasonable price, slightly above manufacturers' cost, allowing for a small profit.

Check the Board of Education regulations on fund-raising before you undertake a school project.

School Calendar
PS 41, The Greenwich Village School
PTA Project



Picture by Maria Landing
3rd Grade (Class 3-208)
9 years old

- **Ethnic Fair** There is a rich mixture of ethnic groups represented in New York. An Ethnic Fair presents a perfect opportunity for you to involve parents and community members in a school project. Committees can be formed to produce crafts, prepare foods and design booths. Students will benefit from exposure to a variety of unique customs, crafts and foods.
- **Holiday Sale** To assist elementary students with their holiday shopping, you can conduct a Holiday Sale. Homemade crafts, houseplants, and items purchased from wholesale vendors should be available. Offer reasonably priced gifts and allow for a small profit for your organization.
- **School Calendars** Investigate the possibility of producing calendars that feature the artwork of the students. You may be able to have these printed at a very low cost and then sell them to parents, students, staff members and community residents.

The task of school communication and school/community relations must be a responsibility shared by parents, students and staff. It requires skill, perseverance, creativity and more than a touch of luck. But finally, when you've helped create an atmosphere of support for and pride in your school, the results will be worth the effort.

About The Alliance

The New York Alliance for the Public Schools is a unique collaboration between community leaders and professionals in the field of education. A voluntary civic organization, the Alliance brings together the leadership of the Board of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators; corporate, civic and community leaders; and a working consortium of Deans at the City University of New York, Fordham University, New York University, St. John's University and Teachers College at Columbia University.

Founded in 1979 under the auspices of New York University, the Alliance is dedicated to the principle that quality public schools are essential to the social fabric and economic health of New York City.

Specifically, the Alliance seeks: to increase the role of the universities in the enhancement of public education; to strengthen the commitment of the business and professional communities to the public schools; and to close the gap between the public's perception of the city schools and their actual performance.

Because it brings together the concerns and expertise of its diverse membership, the Alliance is in an ideal position to effect change in New York City's schools. Alliance projects range from a professional development program for principals to the MENTOR program expanding on high school law-related courses to cash awards honoring outstanding teachers to "Go Public!," the public information campaign. A number of these programs have been replicated in cities across the nation.

For more information, contact:

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